

DARE Newsletter

Vol. 15, Nos. 2/3

Dictionary of American Regional English

Spring/Summer 2012



Photo credit: George E. Hall

DARE staff members, led by Chief Editor Joan Houston Hall, are recognized at the celebratory “shindy” in Madison on May 4. Left to right: Lenny Zwilling, Luanne von Schneidemesser, Janet Monk, Ginny Bormann, Cathy Attig, George Goebel, Roland Berns, Julie Schnebly, Erin Leary, and Elizabeth Blake. Not pictured: Beth Gardner and Esther Hong.

What a Spring!

As the photos in this issue attest, the spring of 2012 was a noteworthy season: it brought plenty of publicity, our own press conference, a mini-conference on “DARE and American Dictionaries,” and, to top it all off, a celebratory shindy. “What’s a shindy?” you may ask. Read on!

Media Attention

With the official publication of Volume V on March 20, DARE enjoyed a brisk and prolonged flurry of media attention. Blogs and articles in the *Guardian*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York*
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Funding Update

Jon E. Sorenson
Director of Development

The afterglow of celebrating the publication of Volume V is still with all of us, but there is no moss growing under the feet of the tireless DARE team. As I write this, members of the production staff are making final revisions to the page proofs of Volume VI (to be published early in 2013). Preparations for the digital version of DARE (to be launched in late 2013) are also under way.

Digital DARE will offer users a large variety of search functions and will make this invaluable

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What a Spring!

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Times led the parade starting in January, followed by more than 100 write-ups in print newspapers, online papers and magazines, and language blogs. Chief Editor Joan Houston Hall gave interviews to 29 of those reporters, as well as speaking on sixteen radio programs, four podcasts, and four television shows.

Want to sample some of the excitement? University Communications has set up a special website celebrating Volume V at <<http://dare.news.wisc.edu/>>. In addition to links to all the publicity, it has maps showing where the *DARE* interviews were conducted, samples of words found in each state, quizzes, audio excerpts, and more. Kudos to Stacy Forster, Jenny Price, James Adams, Nick Weaver, Bryan Shelton, and Dennis Chaptman for developing the site.

NEH Celebrates *DARE*

As the longest-funded project of the National Endowment for the Humanities, *DARE* has a special place in the hearts of our colleagues there. Judy Havemann, NEH's Director of Communications, pulled out all the stops to present *DARE* to the media and to the public March 7-9. She arranged to have Joan Hall and language columnist Ben Zimmer appear as guests on "The Diane Rehm Show," a syndicated radio call-in program with avid listeners across the country. The telephone lines were full, and the show received more than 500 e-mail messages from listeners hoping to have their questions answered!



Photo credit: NEH

Havemann also arranged for Hall and Zimmer to speak at a press conference on March 8. Among the guests were journalists from Reuters, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Washington Post*, and *Voice of America*, all of whom posted stories within the next few days. A special guest was Frank Mankiewicz, a journalist

with a particular appreciation for *DARE*. He told of learning about the *Dictionary* from William Safire; *DARE* came in handy when Mankiewicz needed to convince an irate Congressman that the substantial sum billed by a university for a "commode" was not expended on a toilet, but rather on a substantial piece of fine furniture. (See the first three senses of *DARE*'s entry for *commode*.)



Photo credit: NEH

On March 9 Hall and Zimmer were the speakers at the meeting of NEH's advisory board, the National Council on the Humanities. Consisting of 26 distinguished citizens who are nominated by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate for terms of six years, the Council reviews grant applications and advises the NEH Chairman. It is these members who have approved grants to *DARE* regularly since 1971. Hall was particularly glad to be able to tell them of the many ways *DARE* has been of value to teachers, researchers, librarians, historians, lawyers, doctors, detectives, and general lovers of language.

Mini-Conference on "*DARE* and American Dictionaries"

In the realm of lexicography, reaching the end of the alphabet is a milestone that cannot be left unremarked. Fortunately, three renowned figures in the dictionary world were glad to provide remarks that were appreciative, reflective, stimulating, and amusing. Those gathered at the May 3 mini-conference in Madison were treated to talks by Simon Winchester, Michael Adams, and Erin McKean. Each approached *DARE* in a different way.

Winchester, best known among language lovers as the author of *The Professor and the Madman*, situated *DARE* among the English-speaking world's slang, dialect, and general lexicography projects,

calling it “one of the most romantic word-gathering expeditions in history.”



Photo credit: George E. Hall

Adams, whose lexicographic work runs the gamut from the *Middle English Dictionary* through *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* slang, focused on the quotations used to elucidate *DARE* entries. At the same time that they illustrate regional language variation, he explained, they also reflect the process of forming regional identities.



Photo credit: George E. Hall

McKean, founder of the electronic dictionary *Wordnik*, pointed to some of the world’s quirkiest collectors, who have discovered treasures in unappreciated places. Among lexical rarities, she mentioned *soap* (a word game played on paper), *staddle* (a platform used to support a haystack), and *tooth jumper* (one who extracts teeth with a mallet and punch) as examples of things we might not know about were it not for *DARE*. As one who understands the “taxonomic joy” of collecting anything from stamps to dress patterns to words, McKean

encouraged the audience to stop and appreciate the decades of collecting, of organizing, and of illustrating the more than 60,000 words and senses that make up *DARE*.

The standing-room-only crowd, made up of UW students and faculty, Madison community members, lexicographic colleagues from across the country, and *DARE* fans from far and wide, peppered the speakers with thoughtful questions and expressed their enthusiastic appreciation for the presentations.



Photo credit: George E. Hall

And Now for the Shindy!

Among the *DARE* entries referring to parties, *shindy* seemed to us a lively and appropriate term for the celebration of Volume V. Described in one quotation as “a frolic,” it is defined as “A party or gathering, esp a noisy one with dancing; a spree, shindig.” Although it goes back to 1821 in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in this country it is found most frequently in the South Midland and New England. Why not have one in Wisconsin? Although there wasn’t much room for dancing by the 300 guests, there was plenty of noise and celebration!

Regional music, regional foods, guests from near and far, a drawing, and a surprise presentation to *DARE* made the first Midwestern shindy a party to remember. Please enjoy it through the photos on the next two pages.

DARE on Capitol Hill

March 20 was notable not just because it was the official publication date for Volume V, but also because the White House blog used the occasion to celebrate *DARE*! (Read the blog entry at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/03/19/zydeco-saving-diversity-american-english>>.) On the same day, U.S. Senators and Representatives had the opportunity to learn about projects supported by

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Terry Haller, Chancellor David Ward, and Joan Hall display Robert Cottingham's "Z," the final element in his lithographic series An American Alphabet, published by UW-Madison's Tandem Press. Ward and former Chancellor John Wiley recognized the serendipity in two of the UW's long-term projects reaching the end of the alphabet at the same time. With Haller and Tandem Press Executive Director Paula Panczenko, they presented DARE with this appropriate symbol of our success.

All photos in this spread: George E. Hall



Board of Visitors members Cindie Moore and John Shea with UW Foundation Development Director Jon Sorenson

DARE Editor George Goebel and former DARE Editor Craig Carver



Former DARE Editor Ted Hill

Jackie Cassidy and Danielle Cassidy Levine sample some of the regional treats—the menu included squeaky cheese, Cuban sandwiches, hush puppies, fry bread, lefse, bear claws, Berliners, snickerdoodles, and more.





*UW-Madison
Chancellor
David Ward*



*Rhonda Norsetter
was the winner
of the party's top
prize: a copy of
Volume V signed
by the full DARE
staff.*

The *DARE* Shindy

*DARE Senior Editor Luanne von
Schneidemesser chats with Board of
Visitors member Cindie Moore.*



*Family members gathered to
celebrate the realization of Fred
Cassidy's mantra, "On to Z!"
Left to right: Donna Hapac,
Victor Cassidy, Jackie Cassidy,
John Rosine, Mike Cassidy,
Claire Cassidy, Danielle Cassidy
Levine, Charlotte Cassidy,
Jennifer Cassidy, and Alex
Cassidy.*



DARE's Spring Board of Visitors meeting was sandwiched in among the festivities. Left to right: Mary Lu Mitchell, Helen Agüera (NEH), Erin McKean, Cindie Moore, Jon Sorenson (UW Foundation), Morris Goodman, John Shea, Joan Hall, and George Schueppert. Not pictured: Greg Alfus, Richard Ekman, Harlan Ellison, Robert King, David Maraniss, Allan Metcalf (ex officio), Jacquelyn Mitchard, Robert Moore, Donald Oresman, Virginia Schwerin, and Simon Winchester.

Volume VI

Despite all the spring's festivities, work did not slow down on Volume VI, scheduled for publication early in 2013. Titled *Volume VI: Contrastive Maps, Index to Entry Labels, Questionnaire, and Fieldwork Data*, this book will be comparable in heft to the text volumes. In 1,053 pages, it will include 1,691 maps (geographic and social), the Index to the five volumes of text, the full *DARE* Questionnaire, and all the responses to 430 of those questions. Look for a discount coupon for Volume VI in the Fall issue of the *DARE Newsletter*. ♦

New *DARE* Website

Have you visited the *DARE* website (<<http://hdare.wisc.edu>>) lately? Our site underwent a complete makeover this spring, and there's a lot for visitors to see and do. You can search the Index to all five volumes of *Dictionary* text, learn about the history of the project, listen to podcasts, and watch a video lecture. You can also hear audio clips of speakers from different parts of the U.S., read back issues of this *Newsletter*, check out our "Word of the Month," and test your knowledge of regional words and expressions by taking several *DARE* quizzes.

If you enjoy the quizzes on our website and wish there were more, we invite you to take out your volumes of *DARE* and create a new quiz for us! Send your submissions to Julie Schnebly, 6119 Helen C. White Hall, 600 N. Park St., Madison, WI 53706 or e-mail her at <schnebly@wisc.edu>. ♦

What a Spring!

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NEH. Each year, the National Humanities Alliance sponsors a Humanities Advocacy Day to increase public support for the humanities. In preparation for sending citizen advocates to talk with their legislators, at its annual meeting on March 19 NHA sponsored a "lightning round panel." Invited speakers representing NEH grant recipients had six minutes to describe their projects and explain how they have been useful beyond the borders of humanities. *DARE* is one of the best-known of such projects.

In her six minutes, Senior Editor Luanne von Schneidemesser was able to show how *DARE* has proved valuable not just to teachers, librarians, writers, and historians, but also to doctors, lawyers, forensic linguists, oral historians, natural scientists, actors, and dialect coaches. Armed with this information, advocates then visited with Legislative Assistants of members of Congress from their home states, lobbying for support of the humanities and explaining how constituents in their districts have benefited from NEH funding. ♦

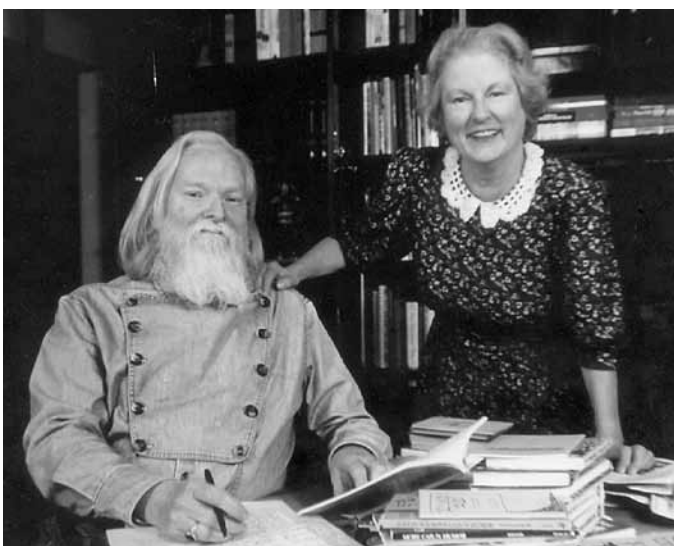


Photo credit: Rouben, RNH Creations

In Memoriam: Robert Easton

Noted dialect coach Robert Easton, "the Henry Higgins of Hollywood," died on December 16, 2011, at the age of 81. Mr. Easton was a long-time friend and supporter of the *DARE* project. In addition to using *DARE* tapes in his work with clients such as Al Pacino, Charlton Heston, Emma Thompson, and Robin Williams, he participated in *DARE*-related panels with Chief Editor Joan Hall at several conferences, always delighting the audience with his flawless renditions of dialects from all over the United States and the world. ♦

Funding Update

Continued from page 1

resource much more widely available. It will also give the *DARE* Editors the ability to update and add entries, ensuring that this important literary treasure will reflect the living, breathing nature of American regional English.

Ongoing editorial work is a necessity, and your continued support is essential for maintaining the quality and breadth of *DARE*. Annual gifts of every size sustain the excellence required for a dictionary project of this magnitude. Designating the *DARE* project as a beneficiary of your estate through the University of Wisconsin Foundation is another way to secure a future for *DARE* and a lasting legacy.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation by check or credit card, please use the coupon that appears below. If you would like information on giving property, appreciated securities, or an estate gift to create a permanent endowment for *DARE*, please e-mail me at <jon.sorenson@supportuw.org> or call me at (608) 262-7211. Thank you for your consideration and your ongoing support. ♦

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